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'A SHA RUWA BA LAIHI BANE': THE SOUND OF CULTURAL CHANGE

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Abstract

This paper explores the cultural dynamics and underlying tensions presented in the song "A Sha Ruwa Ba Laihi Bane" by Alhaji Mamman Shata Katsina. The song, which translates to "Drinking Water Is Not a Crime," serves as a metaphorical and literal assertion of a cultural practice that faces opposition in certain socio-religious contexts. From the many versions of the same song, the researchers drew from the ones available to them, concentrating on the contents common to all the versions. Through a detailed analysis of the lyrics and cultural references (especially the typical maguzawa characters mentioned in the song), this study investigates how the song reflects broader conflicts between traditional Hausa culture of communalism and hardwork and the modern values of drinking destructive foreign liquor that erodes the traditional values given. As gathered from the song, the consumption of this foreign liquor has brought about all sorts of social problems: quarrels between spouses, lack of sympathy between friends and neighbors', as well as laziness among others. Worse is the fact that it incapacitates the hitherto agile and productive youths in the land. Thus, economically too, the traditional Hausa society has suffered the consequences of embracing the giyar kwalba (bottled beer) rather than the giyar hatsi (traditional liquor) its people had been used to. Being originally in Hausa language, the aspects of the song analysed are translated for greater accessibility to non-Hausa readers. The paper also examines the ways in which the artist challenges societal norms and provokes dialogue about cultural identity, morality, and resistance. By situating the song within the framework of critical discourse analysis, this paper aims to contribute to the discourse on the intersection of music, culture, and social change in contemporary society.

Introduction

According to Bichi, "Folklore comes in different forms including expressive art genres such as folksongs, folktales, proverbs, riddles, etc" (86). Of more importance is the fact that "Many folkloric genres, to a certain extent, reflect the way of life of the people. They reflect what they do, what they think, how they lived and have lived, their values, their joys and their sorrows, their values..." (Usman 125). Our analysis of Shata's "A sha ruwa (hence ASR)" is based on Usman's claim that among other forms of folklore, songs "operate to ensure cultural continuity from generations through generations through their role in education. Folklore preserves the established customs and institutions from direct attack." (124). This paper is of the opinion that Shata has tried to prove this scholarly claim. His 'A sha ruwa' is simply about beer.

An oral singer is defined as he who not only entertains his community but also:

informs the public about current events as well as the ancient historical accounts and instructs new generations about tradition, customs, history, folklore and culture of their ancestors. He can also praise, warn, condemns, or advice, depending on the situation and the circumstance (Abdulkadir 37).

Many a religious zealot, and an average moralist in the Hausa-dominated regions of Africa and elsewhere, surely has an axe to grind with Mamman Shata for the latter's statement on 'giya ta kwalba' (the bottled beer) being non-offensive and impliedly, its drinking permissible. Adamu Adamu in his review of *Shata Ikon Allah!* has this description of Shata and his ASR: "the irreverence and indiscretions of a tipsy artist and his sacrilegious disrespect bordering on

blasphemy ... in *Asha Ruwa, Ba Laifi Bane*, in which the purist would see God forbidding liquor and Shata giving license to it." (Bahaushe Mai Ban Haushi blog) That is, probably, why the song ASR hardly gets reasonable mention in most discussions about Shata's works. It is common to hear Shata's fans describe the songs as 'one of the few slips of Shata', and so, not worthy of any formal or serious mention. Some may group it in the category of 'Gagarabadau', a song full of invectives and lacking in verbal hygiene. A closer look at this song however reveals another angle to appraise the verses. Listeners should therefore set aside pre-conceived notions and individual beliefs to understand this fresh angle. The appraisal will thus be purely contextual, looking through Shata's perspective and seeking meanings only in his own sense; with no resort to dogmatic adherences. It is about doing justice to Shata as a folklorist-cum-singer and doing a service to literature.

Review of Literature

Shata's works have enjoyed a lot of critical attention from scholars. The most notable is the 1975 PhD thesis researched by Dandatti Abdulkadir. Since then many researchers have studied Shata's songs in all ramifications of scholarly research – conference papers, journal research articles and BA projects, MA dissertations and PhD theses in universities and other institutions of higher learning. Of note recently is the conference organized solely on Shata by the Centre for Research in Nigerian Languages, Translation and Folklore in conjunction with the Department of Nigerian Languages from the 2nd to 4th of September 2018. In this conference hundreds of academic papers were submitted and many were actually presented. Eventually, in the book of proceedings following from 90 articles were published, with the majority in Hausa language, followed by many others in English and a few in Arabic. This impressive output testifies to the popularity of Shata and his place in the folkloric firmament of not

only Nigeria but the entire Hausa-speaking world.

Of note however, is the people's shying away from critiquing Shata's most morally-controversial song, 'A Sha Ruwa ba Laifi Bane', evidently due to what most listeners feel is contradictory to the Islamic injunction of 'Thou shalt not drink'. Consequently, none of the papers published in this compendium made this song its sole point of research focus. Surprisingly, even 'Gagarabadau', which is full of invectives and taboo expressions, have got a reasonable scholarly attention, but not the 'A Sha Ruwa' whose focus is alcoholism. One could adduce people's cold feet towards this song to the fact that the chorus itself is offensive: 'A sha ruwa ba laifi bane' (consuming alcohol is not an offence). Thus, people wonder if Shata is actually trying to legitimize what is clearly illegitimate in many verses of the Qur'an. Contrary to what most people think this paper is of the opinion that *ba laifi bane* does not necessarily mean *ba zunubi bane*, a chorus that could still have been perfect if Shata had wanted it to be. This motivated our decision to study the song critically within the context provided by the maestro himself (maguzanci and maguazawa) with the hope that our study would open the song to more critical attention.

Alh. (Dr.) Mamman Shata

Muhammad summarises the background to Shata's singing life as follows:

The singer, Mamman Shata was born in Musawa district of Katsina about ninety miles away from the state capital. Mamma's real name is Muhammad, his father Ibrahim Yaro; a nomadic pullo. At tender age, Shata attended Qur'anic school before venturing into selling kolanut. His transition from kolanut hawking in turn served as a spring board to Shata's singing career which began from customary market days' singing contest to folk drama songs and

eventually ending up as a professional singer at about 20 years of age (187). It is a common knowledge that all Shata scholars emphasise the fact that Shata neither inherited nor formally learnt singing. In fact, this is one of the popular claims in the maestro's "Bakandamiya" (magnum opus):

Rok'o shigar shi nai praise-singing I
 ventured into

Na shige shi har na so immersed in it that
 I

Gagari 'ya'yan gado surpassed those born
 into it

There are however very important dates and events in the history of the legendary singer as listed by Gusau (2). These include the day he was given the traditional title of 'Sanyinnan Musawa' in 1980 by then Hakimin Musawa, Alhaji Gidado Usman. Before then the Murtala regime had awarded him the MON award in 1975. Eight years after his becoming the "Sanyinna", the Ahmadu Bello University Zaria (ABU) conferred on him D. Litt (Honoris Causa) in 1988. However, the most contentious date about Shata remains the year of his birth, still being contested by scholars. But the most authoritative, and the most cited, is 1923 which is given in Sheme, Kankara, Albasu and Malami (44) and Gusau (2). The death of the legend occurred on Friday 18th June 1999 at Aminu Kano Teaching Hospital, Kano.

A nan mu ke sallar mu ta Jumma'a
 In another version of the song, he says:
 Yara, mu koma wasa kuloniya
 Mu tashi kana mu
 koma nan Neja
 Nan ne muke zikirin mu
 Na Juma'ah

In other words, he regards the beer joint as a worship place for them to converge and commune – *Neja* and *kuloniya* were clubs in Kano city notorious for exuberance and indulgence. The Niger Club in particular was

It is surprising that Shata, said to have produced more than 10, 000 songs (Usman xii) or 3,000 (Adamu), never wished to have a successor from among the members of his family (Sheme et al. Shata's wish: 'Since I've been blessed not through scholarship, royalty or commerce (wealth), I don't wish anybody related to me by blood, near or far, to become a singer for it will not yield them good in future. *This is my wish.*' (Sheme et al. 12-13).

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical/analytical framework chosen is Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) model of Norman Fairclough's with its triadic framework of *description*, *explanation* and *interpretation* (1989). Our analysis will choose specific lyrics of the song, which will serve as the text for analysis. We shall then explain the lyrics chosen in the context of the song and then interpret what has been explained, relating it to the wider socio-cultural milieu of the song.

The Analysis

Shata's portrayal of 'giya' as a 'nice' stuff is based on reasons to be found in the song itself. Firstly, Shata has steered away from generalizing the acceptance and its permissibility to all Muslims. It was only them, the alcoholics that see it that way. That was why they thronged to "Koloniya", every Friday, to drink away their afternoons. These people absconded from the Friday rituals, as required of every Muslim faithful. They observed their 'prayers' in the hotel:

here we perform our Jumu'at prayers
 boys, let's take our show to Kuloniya
 after which we
 return here to Neja
 where we perform
 Friday supplications

owned by Shata's friend, an Igbo man. Then, it used to host Shata's performances in Kano during his early days of stardom (Gusau 9). Secondly, most of the drunkards mentioned by Shata, particularly those that passed out

after tasting the new brand of beer, are the "arna", the non-believers or idolaters. These people are mostly *Maguzawa*, who though living among Muslims and Christians do not share the morality of the two religions, especially on drinking. So, consumption of bottled liquor is, to this group of people, very permissible.

Thirdly, Shata himself 'sha ya ke' (meaning, he too drinks). Though he does not call himself an 'arne', being a friend to 'arna' warranted the singer's affinity to liquor. One of the main objectives of the song is to remember Shata's days of revelry with his cohort:

Na tuna arna masu bugun giya I
remember the 'arna' that indulge in
alcoholism...

Of course, in such remembrance, no inhibition on liquor is expected from the nostalgic Shata. He narrates the ordeals of some 'seasoned' drunkards, well known to him, who unfortunately had unpleasant experiences with "giya ta kwalba" (beer in the bottle). As

Thus, according to him, it is enough justification that he, Shata, boozes:

....don kun ga Alhaji Shata sha ya ke...

This reason will sound flimsy to those people who do not admire or venerate the legendary oral singer. Minding the fact that people who aped him abound, Shata seems to be giving them the assurance that all is well with his lovers who would like to indulge in alcoholic practices; hence, he used himself as a reference. And truly, to those familiar with the late singer's musical videos, bottled beer is a feature of some of them. When asked in an interview about why bottles of beer ceased to feature in his videos or whether he had stopped consuming alcohol, he philosophically replied that he had not stopped drinking beer; rather, it was the alcohol that got finished! This indicates that Shata was never afraid of making reference to alcohol in his songs, implicitly or explicitly. Such references are found in songs like

he leads us through his reminiscence, however, some doors are let open for our understanding of the essential perception of alcohol among the Hausa people, with clear reference to non-Muslim Hausa folks whom he refers to as "arna masu bugun giya" (atheists/idolaters who drink too much alcohol). But Shata himself admits to be one of them, a drunkard, and that is a major irony in the song.

Fourthly, the Hausa society of song milieu was on the brink of modernity, an era defined and shaped by influences from the western world to whose ways of life the Hausa society had been exposed, through colonialism. As far as the western norms, rules and regulations are concerned, drinking of beer is legal, permissible and allowed.

Fifthly, Shata seems to be addressing only those people that revere, respect and venerate him by simply offering a single explanation for his claim that consuming the bottled beer is not wrong. Obviously then, Shata has certain audience in mind.

you can see that Alhaji Shata (himself) drinks

'Habu-na-Habu, Garba Jikan Garba', 'Habu Kaita, Sarkin Malamai', 'Wo Alhaji Amadu chanchangi', among others.

The song in focus here, 'A Sha Ruwa' is spectacular in the sense that it is wholly on giya (alcohol): what it is, where it is sold/drank, its consumers and even its harmful effects. The song addresses the traditional Hausa man's indulgence in lager (bottled beer) and how radically different it is from the traditional liquor (*giyar hatsi*). From the onset, Shata creates or draws a parallel between the mosque (Muslims place of worship) and the bar (where drunkards gather to buy and indulge in their drinking spree). In contrast to the Hausa Muslims who attend the mosque in order to seek closeness to Allah, the Hausa *arna* take solace in the

bars to commune with their partners in revelry and immoderation.

To bring out this parallel clearly, Shata proclaims:

Bisimil ilehi	In the name of the Lord
Jalla, Ubangiji	The exalted
Kun ji karatun masu bugun ruwa	This is the recital of alcoholics
wadanda ke zikiri	Those who worship
a Kuloniya	in Kuloniya (hotel)
A sha ruwa ba laihi bane	There's no harm in drinking alcohol

In another version, he opens the song with the most important proclamation in Islam 'la ilan ha'i lallah duniya' (actually a corrupt form of *La ilaha illallah* which translates as 'There is no deity worthy of worship except Allah'). This is considered very shocking and unacceptable in religio-moral quarters. This statement which actually admits one into Islam is considered the most salient statement any believer can make is the expression of *tauheed* (believing in Allah, sunbmitting to him and sanctifying Him and

his attribures) seems to have no place in the song, as it sounds quite ironical here, even shocking, considering the subject of the song (alcoholism).

Bars, clubs and hotels are a world of their own, with 'scholars' who give ruling on the best code of conduct. For example, there is a Shehu-na-Soba referred to in the song, who defines the best conduct expected of the members of such places.

Shata reports him in the following lines:

Shehu na soba	The Sheikh of Soba
Mai tsananin sani	of profound knowledge
Shi ya fada mani	told me
Zancen duniya	about worldly affairs
Ya shaida mani	He professed to me
Ukku mahaukata	that three are mad,
Suna da wauta basu da hankula	foolish are they, and insane

These three set of people behave contrary to the proper behaviour of the Hausa man within a larger (even secular) society. Shata

seems to be saying that a Hausa man should be a man of conscience of his society, whether or not he adheres to Islam or Christianity.

The three deviants are thus defined:

Da mai ganin kwalba	He who sees a bottle
Ba tashi ba	belonging to another
Ya mika hannu	yet attempts to pick it
Yai aikin kawai	has wasted his energy
Da mai barin farka tai	And who deserts his woman
A teburi	at their table
Ya sake tebur	and changed tables
Wawan duniya	is a great fool,
Ya daura yaki	who wages a war
Yaci gado nasa	that will conquer his own bed

Da mai shiga otal	Then (he) who goes to a hotel
Ba ko kwabo	penniless
Yafi su wauta	is more foolish,
Wawan duniya	the greatest fool

Shata wants listeners, most probably who patronize bars and other beer joints, to be wary of people who act within this particular milieu and not to misbehave also like the three people he 'preaches' against. It is noteworthy also that this admonition did not emanate from Shata; the singer is simply transmitting what a scholar, knowledgeable in the affairs of drinking joints has preached against. The people of the above character bring chaos into an otherwise calm society. To Shata, the vehicle that transports this unruliness is the bottled lager beer, hence his reference to 'mai ganin kwalba ba tasa ba/ ya mika hannu' (who tries to take a bottle that doesn't belong to him). The society that was orderly and calm even though it was used to consume alcohol now gives in to fracas.

The cultural clash

Culture, being an embodiment of a people's way of life and the gamut of their worldview, has varied indicators which serve as its promoter and a window into its richness. Usman posits that folklore most often serves as a means for members of a society to reflect their culture (125). In this wise, traditional songs, such as Shata's, play the same role and fit conveniently as a conveyor of the Hausa culture. Together with his verses, the famous musician has served a social function: that of providing identity and the opportunity to tell others about oneself.

The song, 'A Sha Ruwa', tells us not only about Mamman Shata, but also about his world, his philosophy and the Hausa society of Nigeria's Post-Independence era. And, like anywhere in the world, a contact with other cultures, in the course of years, has left a significant impact on the Hausa society to the extent that a certain synergy is evident in its efforts to accommodate long inherited (purely

traditional), Islamic and the then newly introduced Western ways.

Interestingly, the song under study clearly touches on all these aspects. It also depicts the multifaceted nature of the Hausa society, with a somewhat cultural clash. Coming from old Katsina emirate, Shata actually experienced the cultural practices of Maguzawa in northern Nigeria about whose religious practices Gusau has said: 'In Hausa settlements were adherents of Maguzanci with their religious practices of worshiping Tsunburbura, Kan-giwa, Uwargona, Kyauka, Magiro, Dankunkuruntu, Dodo, etc' (3). It is natural then that from the stables of these traditional deities, pagans of indisputable repute in alcohol consumption emerge – Dan killi, Gamoda, Jikan Taroro, Ranau, Mai Dare, and others. And Shata, being the sole narrator of events and a participant observer makes an encounter with 'A Sha Ruwa' quite interesting.

The locale, where the misdeeds Shehu-na-Soba decries, is not the traditional joint (drinking place), for this is where the locally brewed liquor is served among friends and peers, sometimes even in the midst of the drinkers' loved ones for it is common to consider in the pagan society mostly as part of meals apparently harmless effect. In contrast, the lager beer adds to the exuberance and invites consumers to greater immoderation. The setting then sets the tone for cultural face off between the traditional and the modern, between the known and the unknown, between the local and the international, among several dichotomies. In the hotel, the befuddled brains of the drunkards lead them to excesses like grabbing other people's bottles and approaching other people's women,

unmindful of the fact that theirs are sitting right beside them.

In the era of hotels, entry to a bar is not as free as the traditional liquor houses where there is warmth of friendship and even brotherhood. In bars, one's money is what earns one respect of the people. It is not surprising therefore that Shehu-na-Soba describes as foolish who would go to a hotel penniless. In contrast, having money may not be an entry requirement in the traditional

joints where *giyar hatsi* is sold. This is hardly surprising as the major ingredient (corn) abounds in the fields; in fact, most drinkers are producers of the *hatsi* itself. Based on these facts, people will only be too glad to offer free drinks to their friends, contrary to what obtains in the (modern) beer parlours. So to free oneself from embarrassment, the Sheikh (Shehu) thus admonishes having enough money to buy their own drinks by way of describing those who behave contrary to his admonition as foolish:

Da mai shiga otal	And who'd enter a hotel
Ba ko kwabo	without a penny
Yana da wauta	suffers imprudence,
Wawan duniya	greatest fool!

In furtherance of the cultural face-off, Shata portrays *giyar kwalba* as being more injurious upon self and the society at large than the traditional *giyar hatsi*. This is shown

in how the former (the beer) kills productivity in the hitherto hardworking Hausa man.

The Hausa man now becomes indolent as a result of the heavy sleep induced by the liquor:

Ka ji wanda yassha	Here's who drank
Tun ran Jumma'a	since Friday
Da shi da tashi	but didn't come to
Sai ran laraba	until on Wednesday

In another version of the song, it is even a seven-day uninterrupted sleep: 'da shi da tashi/sai wata Juma'a'. Definitely, on the productivity ladder, the consumer in reference (the Hausa man) is at the bottom and may likely remain there for life. So, in Shata's view, the foreign *giya* does more harm than good not only to the consumers but also to the society at large. If a significant percentage of the working population indulges in this, the economy will no doubt suffer a down turn. Not only does it render the agile unproductive but it destroys them

altogether, so much so that the people around its victims wonder what this stuff this new beer is made of. Also, the bottled beer destabilises the orderliness and mutual respect required for family growth and development. This point is underscored in how Gamoda Dan-Ali, a well-known *giyar hatsi* champion, was overpowered by the *giyar kwalba* to the extent that he was knocked out for seven days, and upon recovery became grouchy, engaging his wives in fights.

About the champion, Shata reveals:

Wannan bukin mashaya, ba a fada mashi	Never tell this chap any drinking event
In an fada mashi	If you do,
Shanye giyar yake	he drinks all the beer available!

Despite his prowess and fame, however, some bottles knocked him off for seven days with the result that:

Da shi da mata ana daka	he and women were indoors
Sai fada	quarrelling
Suna giyan nan	saying this liquor
Bata hatsi bace	is not of grains
 Ni dama ruwan nan	 to me, this 'water'
Bata saye bace	shouldn't be bought

The greatest devastation of the modern liquor is illustrated in form of the list of drunkards who tried the *giyar kwalba* and ended up becoming useless (*mutu*, not in the sense of being dead). However, it is instructive that all the drunkards listed were of Maguzawa extraction (a non-Muslim Hausa group), who were not bound by any Islamic injunction, they already had roguish appendages glued to their names. Therefore, 'Dan-killi Arne (the atheist/idolater/traditionalist), Alu Nabagara Mai-Tumbin Giya (the beer-belly), etc clearly describe great alcoholics of their time. This point is very important in contextualizing the song. Their being non-Muslims and non-

Christians frees them from the constraints of any revealed laws. In this context, *giya* (alcohol of whatever make) is neither prohibited nor frowned at; in fact, it is celebrated and considered in this sociocultural milieu a way of life.

The traditional and seasoned Hausa drunkards had already earned a place in the liquor-draining business. Naturally, these die-hard drunkards should have migrated safely to the modern bottled lager beer. But alas! The opposite became the case as their encounter with its power proved disastrous.

Shata enumerated its victims in several lines:

Da wa, da wa ne, yash sha, yam mutu? Who and who had drunk and died?	
Jikan Taroro and Ranau	Jikan Taroro da Ranau
Ya mutu	died
 Dan-killi Arne yas sha, ya mutu.	 Dan killi Arne drank And got knocked off
 Na-Rana Arne ya bugu ya buge	 Na-Rana arne knocked down and got knocked
 Mai dare ya zo, ya sha, ya mutu.	 Dai Dare came, drank And got knocked off
 Alu Na-bagara ya sha, ya mutu.	 Alu Na-bagara drank And got knocked off
 Ga Gamoda Dan-ali ya sha, ya mutu.	 here's Gamoda Dan-Ali who drank And got knocked off
 Ka ji wanda yash sha, tun ran Jumma'a	 He it was that drank (and passed out) since Friday

Da shi da tashi
 sai wata Jumma'a. and couldn't come to
 till another Friday.

Da shi da mata ana daka,
 sai fada.... He was indoors with women.
 quarrelling...

It was a shock that overwhelmed everyone on
 seeing the effect of imported European type
 of beer. It had just 'beaten' the well-known

beer champions around! That prompted a
 series of questions by women in Gamoda
 Dan-ali's house:

Mata suna giyar nan
 ba ta hatsi ba ce. The women were wondering, (saying):
 Is not of grains.

In ta hatsi ce, ba ta saye ba ce. If it was of grains, it shouldn't be for sale.
 Kai, in ta hatsi ce, wa ya sayo masa? Kai, if it was of grains, then who bought it for him?

Form the above lines, even the buyer of the
 offensive liquor is under scrutiny and
 investigation, not only the consumer. The
 already known local liquor, 'barasa',
 'burkutu', or 'maho', in Hausa land is made
 from fermented corn grains brewed locally
 but these extraordinary effects that have sent
 many prominent "arna" rolling on the ground
 and, ultimately, dying was never heard of.
 Perhaps, this is why Shehu-na-Soba advises
 the three sets of people to beware of the
 imported, foreign liquor of doubtful
 ingredients. It could not be of the same 'hatsi'
 they knew. May be, it was not even meant for
 sale. It was absolutely strange.

than legitimizing what is illegitimate as some
 critics of the poet may say, has simply
 brought out the conflicts of culture and
 negative effects of adoption of a foreign
 lifestyle. Lager beer introduced has brought
 about all sorts of social problems: quarrels
 between spouses, lack of sympathy between
 friends and neighbors', as well as laziness
 among others. Worse is the fact that it
 incapacitates the hitherto agile and
 productive youths in the land. Thus,
 economically too, the traditional Hausa
 society has suffered the consequences of
 embracing the *giyar kwalba* rather than the
giyar hatsi they had been used to.

Findings and Conclusion

Having contextualised the seemingly
 offensive song within the traditional and
 largely atheistic setting, it becomes open to
 our critical scrutiny. Benefitting from this
 scrutiny, the study has exposed the ills of
 liquor produced in modern breweries to the
 consumers and to the society at large.
 Looking at Shata's 'A Sha Ruwa' from the
 perspective of conflict of cultures, we are able
 to arrive at the conclusion that the song is in
 remembrance of those giant names in alcohol
 consumption among the Maguzawa of that
 time. Looking at this controversial song in the
 light of conflict of cultures, we are able to
 arrive at the conclusion that the song, rather

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